

Another Story (Another Us)

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Another Story (Another Us)

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Summary

Five universes where Alina and Aleksander don't have a happy ending, and one where they do.

Notes

Title comes from the [poem by t.c.](#) which originally inspired the fic, including [this gifset using the same poem](#).

I also pulled a lot of inspiration from [this poem by Elizabeth Hower](#).

I haven't read the books and hadn't even realized they were making a show until it showed up on Netflix, and I went in knowing that these two were not endgame, but I couldn't help but ship them anyway. (I blame Ben Barnes and Jessie Mei Li for their ridiculous chemistry and faces.) I just want them to be happy somewhere.

The dialogue at the beginning of part 1 is from episode 1x07 of Shadow and Bone.

1

“We could’ve had this.” Alina’s gaze flicked briefly to his lips and it was almost as if she could still feel his mouth on hers. “All of it. You could’ve made me your equal.” She dropped her gaze, the sting of betrayal stronger than her memories from the fete. “Instead you made me this.” She pressed his hand to her collarbone for one sharp moment before stepping back. “You don’t care who suffers as long as you win.”

Kirigan could only stare at her for several long beats, eyes wet, before looking down. When he looked back up at her, his eyes were hard despite the emotion she could still see there. “Fine. Make me your villain.”

Alina watched, heart bruised and cracked as Kirigan walked out of the tent. *Aleksander.*

Her eyes were wet and part of her couldn’t quite believe that she could yearn for him, love him after everything he had done. After everything he still planned to do.

The horror and anger and disgust were there, but she couldn’t entirely forget the looks he had given her previously, the thoughtful way he had treated her. A memory of a soft smile flashed through her mind and her traitorous heart fluttered.

How had it all gone so wrong so quickly?

With a frustrated huff, she turned her back to the tent entrance.

Some people believed that there were other worlds, other realities out there where you existed, but with changes, large and small to make it not quite this world. Alina had laughed when she had first heard the theory. Surely that couldn’t be possible. She was the only Alina Starkov, and hoping there were others out there with better lives wasn’t going to do anything but make the world she did live in harder to take.

She still didn’t really believe in these alternate worlds, but in that moment she ached for an Alina and Aleksander somewhere who were happy, who weren’t pulled apart by cruelty or war or wrong choices. If they could be happy *somewhere*.

Her eyes slid shut and she could picture them, hand in hand as the equals she knew they could be, their smiles for each other unhampered and soft.

She held that image in her mind for a moment before she opened her eyes. For Ravka, for the Grisha, and for that happy version of themselves, she would fight him. He would not succeed.

2

Alina walked briskly down the sidewalk, trying to weave in and around the other people walking around her. She was supposed to be meeting Mal and his friends for dinner and she was late. She’d been kept late at work and missed the train she needed.

Aside from some gentle ribbing, the guys wouldn't mind her being late, but after a long day at the office, all she wanted was some good food and company.

Squeezing past two older women she could see the restaurant's sign just at the end of the block.

Someone's hand brushed against hers as they went the other direction and the feel of their skin against hers moved her focus away from her destination. She turned to see who it had been and only caught a glimpse of a tall man in a long black overcoat. She could see his features in profile and even with just a quick look she could see he was incredibly handsome, dark hair slicked back, his beard trimmed neatly.

Someone else jostled her and she turned back in the direction she had been going. She glanced at her watch before moving again, knowing it would only be a minute before she arrived.

3

Aleksander blocked an attack, his shadows moving around him in every direction as he fought off multiple attackers. Even with the Fold gone, there was still war and his desire to protect his people had not changed.

Alina had helped him see that how he had been living was not the answer, that he could trust her as an equal and they could make the world a better place together. She was here too, fighting at his back just as fiercely as he was. Back to back, they fought almost as one, protecting each other and using their considerable power against their enemies, Sun and Shadow working together. He could see her light out of the corner of his eye, and it never failed to give him courage and hope.

His desire for control in all things had almost led him to destroy everything between them, but she had pushed him to trust her, to share the truth and the load. He would forever be grateful for her and her love.

The battle continued and he pushed his attackers further back with his shadows.

A soft cry sounded behind him, and it was a voice he knew well. His blood froze to ice as he felt Alina crumble behind him.

He barely had the presence of mind to throw a shield of shadows up around them before dropping to his knees beside her.

She looked up at him, unseeing. She was one of the most powerful and important Grisha in existence but she couldn't stop a bullet to the head. There was nothing a healer could do now. Cradling her to him, he pulled his shadows tightly around them, a scream escaping his mouth.

4

Alina looked at the official court document in front of her. This day had been long coming, and it had been a battle to get here, but now that the divorce was final, she could only feel

numb.

She ran her fingers over his name at the top of the page. *Aleksander Morozova*.

How had they gotten here in such a short amount of time? She had known him for five years and at the beginning everything had seemed so bright. Like they could take on the world together.

She let out a sigh. She was so tired. The divorce had taken almost two years to finalize, with him fighting her at every turn, trying to convince her to come back, as if the lies and manipulation he had put between them weren't insurmountable.

He used to be her favorite sight, with his smiles and the intensity of his dark eyes that seemed to see right through her. Now, all she could see when she thought of him was how he had looked in court--haughty and unbending, not willing to show the vulnerability she could see just behind his eyes.

There was a part of her that loved him still, and while she would not be returning to him, she felt so much sadness at what they had become. He had spun such beautiful visions of their future together and instead it had fallen apart, proving to be nothing stronger than spun sugar. Beautiful but fragile.

She pushed the court document away from her and stood, a sudden determination flooding through her. She was Alina Starkov again and always, and she would not let this--or him--get the better of her.

5

Aleksander knocked three times before taking a step back. He knew she was home and he hoped she didn't open the door, take one look at him and close it again. He knew they were over. He wasn't here to try and win her back. He simply needed to see her once more before she left.

The door opened slowly and then Alina was in front of him. Her eyes were guarded, but he saw the same yearning and resignation that he felt. "Aleksander," she said, her voice weary, but not surprised. "Please don't--" she broke off, but he could hear the different ways that sentence could have ended.

Please don't try to change my mind.

Please don't make me regret this choice.

Please don't make this harder than it has to be.

He held up his hands to reassure her. "I just wanted to say goodbye."

She nodded and stepped back to let him into her apartment. It was empty, she must have sent the moving boxes ahead to her new apartment hundreds of miles away.

He loved her still, had loved her from almost the first moment he met her and knew she loved him in return, but in the end it hadn't been enough. They wanted different things, and had chosen different paths. It wasn't about compromise or sacrifice or fighting for each other. In the end, they weren't what they needed. They had both come to the same conclusion and ended things a month ago.

"When's your flight?" he asked as they stood in her empty kitchen, her arms folded, his hands in his pockets. The man he had been when they first met would have manipulated things to make her stay, caging her in somehow. As much as he was tempted to do something to keep her with him, it would dull her light and he would never forgive himself.

"It's at 4. I was going to call a cab soon."

He nodded and didn't offer to drive her. This had to end here. "I wanted to wish you luck," he said, his voice suddenly rough, and he cleared his throat, the sound too loud in the space between them. "You're going to do so well at this new job."

"Thank you." Her smile was tight with emotion, but she moved forward to wrap her arms around him. He pulled her in close and leaned down to press a lingering kiss to her hair. She felt so right in his arms, but he knew that didn't matter anymore.

She stepped back after a moment.

"I should go," he said as he moved back into the hall.

She followed him to the door.

"Travel safe," he said as she opened it for him.

She nodded, but didn't speak and he wondered if this visit had been a mistake. The door shut softly behind him and he took in a fortifying breath, knowing he wasn't going to see her again.

+1

Alina lifted her face to the sun, her eyes sliding shut. Her lips spread in a small smile at the warmth against her skin. It was the first nice day in a while, the first sign that spring was on its way.

She was in the main palace garden, the sounds of birds in the trees and her infant son, Feliks, chattering to himself as he played next to her. Her smile widening, she ran a gentle hand over his dark hair.

He turned to her, holding out the wooden horse in his hand, narrating something about his toys only he understood.

"Is that right?" she asked.

The sound of footsteps drew her attention and she looked up to see Aleksander standing in front of them.

“How was your meeting?” she asked, not getting up. He had been meeting with Fjerdan representatives and while their relations with Fjerda were vastly improved, those meetings always left him drained. She usually joined him during these kinds of meetings, but not today.

“I will tell you later,” he said with a shake of his head, and she could tell it hadn’t gone well.

She nodded. They had come a long way since those first few years and she knew he wouldn’t try and obscure the truth from her. Not anymore.

At the sound of his father’s voice, Feliks looked up, his voice turning excited as he reached his arms up.

With a chuckle, Aleksander leaned down to pick Feliks up and held him close.

Alina watched with a warm and familiar affection as he began talking to their son as if his babbling was completely understandable.

“You are quite right, Feliks,” he said as he caught her eye and gave her the smile she considered hers.

He pressed a soft kiss to the side of Feliks’s head before settling down on the blanket next to her. Feliks struggled in Aleksander’s arms as he reached for his toys. Aleksander let him back onto the blanket with a soft laugh before turning his attention back to Alina. “How are you feeling?”

“Better than I was this morning,” she said, moving one hand to rest against the firm swell of her stomach and remembering the nausea that had kept her in their suite only a few hours before.

“I am glad to hear that,” he said with a sympathetic expression. He reached a hand out to cup her cheek, his thumb rubbing a gentle back and forth against her skin. She leaned in to press her lips to his, and he met her halfway, the kiss staying soft and tender.

Alina pulled back with a laugh as Feliks batted at her with his hand, several indignant sounds making it clear how he felt about being trapped between his parents as they leaned over him. With a focus he had previously reserved for the war effort and ruling, Aleksander began talking and playing with Feliks.

Alina watched them knowing this was exactly the life she wanted and needed, even if it had been a long journey to get there.

She caught Aleksander's eye again and she would always be grateful they had been able to become true partners and life and in love. Their past held so much--love, hatred, violence, betrayal and sweetest of all, redemption and forgiveness. As painful as much of it had been at the time, she wouldn’t change where they had ended up.

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